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PROFANE WITNESS

"Hosannah to the beasts!" the angels cried.
"Praise them who by man's hand are crucified
for meat and leather, ivory and oil.
Bless them whom men call spoil.
Praise to their patience, courtesy, and trust.
Since men won't praise them, God's own angels must!"

I stood among the singers, and I tried
not to look human, opened my mouth wide
and sang, though scarcely as an angel sings,
hunched up my shoulders to resemble wings,
pushed my hat backwards, praying that the brim
looked like the haloes of the seraphim.

Useless. The angels smelt me, turned about
and pointed at me, till I dwindled out.

On hands and knees I left, but not before
I'd heard a lion from the altar roar
and twenty elephants from twenty trunks
blare TE LEONEM like Gregorian monks.
Rising, I peered a moment from the porch
and saw the whole nave blazing like a torch.
The music ended. All was hushed because
of the laying on of huge angelic paws.

Dilys Laing

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NOT NOW

The clouds are surrounding the
moon up above,
hiding from me my only love.
The sky is angry, there's red
in its face.
Starting my way I quicken my pace;
the storm is very near.

William Saunders

ONE DAY TO ANOTHER

Yesterday, its time being years,
Being so full of all the fears,
Unknown love, thus, happiness none,
Losing all, nothing ever won,
Life dogmatic, so factual,
Taking the world as actual,
All prayers were prayers to be from it;
Black days, when you go to sum it.

Today, golden light from the sun
With not a thing completely done,
Colors filling the blue blue sky,
Picking roses that shall not die,
Love, happiness, joyously found,
Wind and the willows, lovely sound.
No more sadness, no gloomy days in sight;
For yesterday ended last night!

William Saunders

PERPETUAL MOTION IN MONHEGAN

White chases white, neat butterflies indict
the air as endless bubble of glucose
with veiny dripping pictures, slip their
pincers to a petal, fold huge vans and
twang the swollen pistil. No garbage on
the sea, the sobbing gull forces his shadow
to be still, mates with it on the dropping-
spotted rock and folds up. I see the bee
working the fuzzy duster of his belly,
punishing a flower with so much relief
it rotates like a pinwheel or a star.
To get into the act, I whirl a stone,
watching it slap-slap the skin of water,
splashing spastic tendons that heal over,
until it sinks through barred and smoky green
and strikes, sending the fine slow spread of sand.

Neil Weiss

LETTER TO LEDA

Leda! I will, before I send snow,
hold you fast. — It's because you think of me!

There was a time I could let you go
when I saw you crawl, dugs almost to your knees,

your hands all creased with twigs, I hov-
ering, too torrid to touch my wings.

That time is past. Earth and love

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in autumn have their flourishing

before winter: burn of the sun is special,
one is caked with love, as a potato,

you feel fuzz peel and burst and fall,
until it hurts to stand erect, to know

things are not what they are. Hope gone,
we'll be dripping weed, croaking swan, swan, swan.

Neil Weiss

HURLY-BURLY-AH

As flipping I was to the birds
Ungainly walking on her grave,
Almonds, with no spirit-words
She upward with the wind said
Dave,
Come again young to me with a hey
And shining violets; and come
To me from enormous Eden; play
The hurly-burly with maybe some
Ah, sweetness; come (but in the grass
With birdies, say no more Alas,
Nor whimper) and in dreaming dress
These bones, in kiss these cheeks of air;
And surge with earthen loveliness
Your old-new hands through this white hair:

As I was dreaming in the breeze.
And suddenly, the awkward birds
Cooed, flew to me with an ease
Of nesting in her feathered words.

David J. Lyttle

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THE TERMINAL CALLING: IWO JIMA

Pfc O'Higgins
(Or Hicky as the frat boys used to call him)
Has done got a hole in his head;
Put there by a Jap maybe,
Or perhaps a buddy.
Anyhow, he's just lyin' there
With his brains on them rocks
And his belly open.
No petty frat brat was he. No sir,
He was on the Dance Committee.

(What's the catch today, he asks and turns towards the sea.)

They used to say Ol' Hicky
Came from some shithook town in Nebraska,
But when it's raining hell out of them damn hills,
They don't generally ask ya.
(Christ man, it's hot.)
They used to say when Ol' Hicky was a kid,
He'd say to himself, Man, am I going
To have a time of it. I've got brains.
(On the rocks, please, I'm tense.)
Then them goofs went and shot off the lid.
(Christ man, I'm soaked.)

(Peter sorts out the good and bad in the net. By God, he thinks, if that fanatic comes by again, I'll tell him a thing or two.)

They say he used to think a lot, that boy.
Not like the other frat brats, not a sot.
Was going to be the conscience of the world, that lad.
Takes long walks and talks things over with his dad.

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(And won't his mom bawl when she gets the news.)
Had a girl too, that boy. Yes sir,
Hicky was well-rounded. So's she.
Jesus, what a body. Here's her picture
From his wallet. Name's Midge.
(Oh hell, goof, what's his old lady
Going to do with it?)
That bastard just lyin' there
With his brains on them rocks
And his belly open, hell,
He weren't nothing. He weren't no bridge.
Hell, he was just the rope walker that fell.

(But that fanatic does come by again, and so Peter dies in Rome instead of in the net with the fish.)

Thorne Deuel

FAULKNER

Moustached, dapper, seated amidst the bric-a-brac of
success,
Weighty honors and a considered esteem,
He writes with unrhythmic passion
Of the South's languid violence,
Walking in the sweating dark through leafy arches of lust
To the casually curious Saturday-night square,
Or sleeping in sunlight on a tobacco-stained porch
With a hat over its face.

Joseph Herman

THE AUNT

When children are very young
Aunts can be quite anyone
Who is old and unremarkable.
This aunt was archetypically correct,

Doubting children and their dogs
Aching when it rained, praying for accord
Between the sexes and the late arrival.
Content with nothing if it were right . . .

When I was young I thought of God
As color and found that it was hard
To banish him to blue or white,
The colors I knew from watching.

Once when I was ill and wrapped in bed,
At five o'clock my Aunt stood at my head
And swished me with her crinkled hand.
And, as she bent to kiss me I saw descending

An assault of color, moving in the air
A troop of peacocks tails, a flair
Of spectrum wrenched from light.
Astounded with this sudden firework

I carefully constructed God again,
His temper and his mind, his ken,
His fatal hand, and discovered
My Aunt had carried on her head

My God without a single angel
To help her with the load!
When will
The Aunt reveal again the answer and
The question: Quem colorem habet Sapentia?

Ned O'Gorman

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PEOPLE, THINGS, AND SPACEMACHINES

1. A little dwarf one time
had feet as big as a dime
and a very ridiculous daughter
with feet as big as a quarter.

2. The smallest girl was Wistery
she read the wars of history
she bought a book of Barahant
and gave it to her mother's aunt.

3. The beds are dancing in the streets
the beds are dancing in the streets
the clouds are blue
the sea is new
the moon is eating caribou
the beds are dancing in the streets

4. The little girl said
as she looked at the moon,
it looks like a beautiful locket.
The old man said
as he stood on his head,
go soak your head in a bucket.

The little girl said
as she looked at the moon,
for sure you aren't very nice.
The old man said
as he ate pears and bread,
be quiet or I'll say it twice.

5. One hundred and twenty reams of time
one space with seven blues
an angleworm committed crime
to buy a pair of shoes.

One hundred and fifty pails of now
and sixty crocks of here
a raven could not reason how
a worm could steal his beer.

6. A pair of shoes spoke up one day
and said, now listen here,
if I must work to earn my pay
I'll have a fine career.

If I must work both night and day
I'll work both day and night
I'll work a year, or ten, I say,
I'll work with all my might.

But what about your soles, I said
to which they did reply,
when those wear out I will be dead
but not until I die.

Douglas Browning

A PRAYER FOR MICHAEL

You asked me for a prayer, who if he pray
prays to the rose of darkness dead to prayer,
unfolding dark of dawn for all I say.

If not my faith, yet love shall show the way,

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mounting the furies of the heavenly stair —
what if a life, what if a world away! —

to where your god redeems us by a hair.
May his shed blood your faith holds true be true,
and bless these words I cast into the air.

If Agony flow in me, flowing in you,
my heresy may better plead the cause.
And if my darkness pray, shall God ask who?

O you are exiled from the light because
you know the light, but darkness rules my bones
with weeping wisdom that there are no laws;

yet shall I kneel on chaos, time's cold stones,
and lift my heathen prayer to that Love
the stars spell out in their mysterious runes,

and pray for you. O God whose mercies have
the bleeding dove in keeping and the snake,
the swarming mouths within the hungry cave,

speed Michael on all journeys he shall take,
and may his journeys lead him to the tent
of marriages, where warring selves shall make

communion with what is and be content,
whether he suffer the incubus of night
or suffer the lightning of Your ravishment.

Confound the angry eagles of his doubt,
grant him thy morning's nuptial grace, I pray,
o light in darkness, darkness in the light.

And plead for me, my prayer, that I too may,
waking like him, leap into naked day.

Robert Friend

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THE LOTOS-EATERS
(Odysseus, in finery on his terrace, entertains the ladies of Ithaca)

I knew the type: the kind
You could push around. Some
Were suckers for this — their
Gut was full, after all that sea.
— "Why do **anything?"** the faggots sighed,
Who saw us retching on the beach.

Even from where I lay, it was rough.
They were so sweet, floating
In couples, offering their berries
Here and there, like zephyrs
Suddenly uncombing an Achaian.

Ladies, what would you have done?
Well, could one man do it?
Ship had drifted in dead calm,
Till, under the Wenchtaker's cloud,
The Lightning — and the current
Took us. Hard to say, sighting
Those freaks, if the gods had
Claimed that land or left it!

Our men didn't help much. If only
A panic, at least a shudder, we'd
Have bundled them off to the ship (the
Few of us) — but they sidled around us
Like silk, worse than the ninnies.

I had to see for myself. With me,
It wasn't so simple: they didn't
Talk big. They played at my feet.
Every pipe: an apology. It was

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Hard to be uncivil. They fed me
Fine wine from Ithaca (how did
They get it!) and told me I was
Pleasant. How could I leave!

I rose up worried, and even my own
Men cheered. "Bah!" I grunted
At one point; and they all politely
Assented, like sheep. I stood
In a fine rain of berries. Noble
Ladies, there was nothing to it! —
We all got up, helping each other,
And sailed for days, for days . . .

David Galler

SIMON OF CYRENE

If you ever go alone, on a path down a mountain,
the sky all
around you, and a crowd gathers at the bottom,
you cannot
go back. So I descended, like a fool, bumpkin
that I was,
thinking of my cats. Whistling, I entered
their midst.
Before I knew it, they had raised their staffs,
and piled up
on me, spilling my milk-pots. My head
rose, cork on
that sea of bodies, three times, and I saw
the quiet one,

whom the crowd had hidden, who smiled (yes, like my
father had once).
A nice one, I thought, this all must be a game;
they will pay
me for my milk, if I play along. It was hard,
not knowing
the rules. But when they herded me up to a huge
cross, I swung
it to my back without question. That seemed
to please them.
(I sagged under high sun, once nearly losing
my balance —
they all jeered, and his smile seemed different.)
We walked on.
That seemed to be what they wanted. Sallow men,
they were a
strange lot . . . I could have put it down as
a bad joke,
but he walked before me, crowned with thorns, and
a word for
everyone. You should have seen how many wept.
Strange game, this . . .
And the soldiers kicked him, when he dropped.
I'm a country
boy. I see few people but the goats. It is
an honor, I
think, to be asked to do anything, but
I hate to
be shoved. I climbed through the wails and insults,
trying to
forgive them. When we reached the summit, they tore
it from me,
and sent me spinning down the path, in the dust.
From the bottom

of the hill, I thought: Fine game! now I miss
everything . . .
and what about the money for my milk! I shaded
my eyes. There
he was — no doubt of it — stretched like a bat —
and the cold
clear air tumbled their shouts — and his eyes
shone like coins
for me in the sun . . . Something went wrong that
morning don't
ask me what. Don't ask me why I stay
alone, near
my shack, without even thinking . . . Did they **have**
to play their
game **that** morning? THE DEVIL TAKE MY GOATS, THE
PATH, THE LOT!

David Galler

AFTER RUBENS

Olee, a woman cried for joy, a child
Between this carved-out region in my back
And this my sweeter part. I almost split
To see my husband creep around the house.
Last night he kissed my belly, and today
He sang all morning in the fields.
(I watched him pull a turnip from the ground
Turning it over and over in his hands . . .)
And two days now he's been afraid to touch me.
I laugh myself to sleep . . . Tonight I'll have him.
Olee, I'm filled with fingers like a glove.

Bruce Berlind

MOBILE XXXXVIII

large men who weep
can seldom carry
heavy tragedy

with grace,
becomingly
as large men should,

the regimen

of sorrow defeats them,
turns them into mourning cattle
headed for high clover
hoping sorrow will poison food
having too little ingenuity
to brew a poison that will work
having too little courage
to walk beneath rivers
or choke themselves,
they mourn and shake with
elephantine fears
dripping huge elephantine tears
too large to court for pity,
too soft to stand like years,
plinths in the memory,
the severe basalt face,
the alabaster tree.

Kenneth Lawrence Beaudoin

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THE UNDERGROUND AGENTS

Between classes,
In this basement room,
The vines outside mew
In the sunlight, and tendrils
Pry at the ignorant glass
While student feet, all mismated,
Snuffle the walks

In a poet's eyes.
Now the casts rattle in the cast
Museum, and Zeus himself braces
His buttocks against an old man's
Feather duster, while I — I
Affect the jeopardy of sleep
Perhaps to lure

A phrase that will rave
Or will swing like the bat's
Black wing, or will grow within,
Round as a wen, or the rubber
Detonator soft in a pocket,
Ready and quivering to explode
The infernal mirrors

Of all the minds
Of all the keepers of our
Poetry, in poetry's Managerial Age.
Now all bells ring and Keats
Writhes once again under the
New Instructor's steady sneer
Or a New Scholar

Leers above
The corpse of John Clare's

Giddy hours, smiling the kill:
"And can one **really** write, if mad?"
No matter, though some may hear
Good sleep takes the girls
And no one reads.

Now on the steppes
Of these classroom hours
Hoof print and these Tartars overriding
Thunder benumbs the brain's chaste
Corridors — or like Dinosaurs their hides
Foul the halls, and their eye
Is reptile and sly

In every transom.
But still, outside
This room and our appointment's
Unlocked door, he scowls and conjures
Still the forbidden delicacy of flight —
His jacket leather, buttoned high
Against them all.

Somewhere concealed
Under the old boards
Of memory are his muddy ciphers:
The night attack, or his mother
Dying slowly, now, of a cancer.
He advances, drops the emblems
Of his redemption

Squarely between
Us, and I see a line
That reads, "The lilies bloomed like fires
Of Hell, or tracer bullets". Behind
The jacket one sees the squirm

Of talent which will surely bore
Like a spirochete

Devouring at last
Even the shins of his pride.
Zeus rattles and all the tendrils dive
But this new poet smells my death,
And imperiously rattles his verses:
We leave, but I go to be milked
In committee meeting.

James B. Hall

RITUAL

After mother's embroidered tears
He was brought to an ivory room
Floating with white gauze curtains,
Unaware of clinical whispers
Arranging the feathery surgery.

Then the mild Rabbi blessed the event
And the traditional flaming blade
Slashed a son of Abraham's seed
To bleed and thirst for God's vintage
In the wound and the wine.

Later, the rain wrote its liquid script
On the windows, and mother kissed his tears,
The secret flower that lit
His face with arching rainbows,
And he slept again in her fruitful garden.

Selwyn S. Schwartz

IT TAKES A HEAP OF

home, home on the range
where the deer and the buffalo play
but not mama and papa,
they fight.

i am home
because of hysterical entreaties
from mother:
"come home, come home,
your father is exicting me" —
i come home and that monster,
my father,
is a man
not a monster;

and all is sweetness and light;
well, not exactly —
sort of an armed truce prevails
and i strike the only discordant note
with my shrieks of rage
because mother has sent my favorite coat
to "underprivileged" european relatives.

"get it back," i scream;
get it back — indeed.

until the episode of the coat
all was well
all hostilities were almost successfully veiled
for i had proven my love.

how did i prove my love?
i engaged in a 48 hour eating marathon
chain eating
downing dynamite specials
which left little room for psychosomatic disorders

so real were my digestive pains.
did you ever eat beans and stuffed cabbage at the same
meal?
powerful. almighty!
and quarts of jello.
and why should i kick?
it's good
and takes care of the compulsions born of tension
and proves that i can appreciate mama's culinary
prowess —
six pounds worth in three days
that's how much i appreciate it,
six pounds
the size of a medium chicken
or large squab
or small turkey —
take your pick.

but why gripe?
i should, and do bask,
in the unquestioning affection
of my two sweet, aging parents.

Martha Glaser

OUT ON THE LONG, LONG PIER

Out on the long, long pier, at summer's end,
the long day closing and the night at hand
over the water, and over the quiet land,
we left our playing in the sand, our senses opened.

The late bird found us watching.
We felt the twinkling crescent of the shore lights swing
to the same cool breath that crossed our hands.
We heard time pass, and thunder coming.

David Melvin Paul

THE VIGILS

It is time for the trees in motionless flight in a ring
Through the shaken powder of fatigue,
For the dogs, nosing their rippled bodies,
And for the shadow of a burning table
Reversing, into the lake,
To lift from the heart of the urn
Of water a man limbed all in metal,
His visor dazzling, that his iron lips
Describe in excessive silence as he moves
Skyward, the blue hilt of space
Buried in the lake, and its handlers
Tangled in the roots of the ceremony he makes clear.
A shout knocks and blazes; water destroys the wood with
light.

But the two boys sit quietly
In the cure or vigil of their fallen dusk,
And the shining-flat of the ring
Of pines on the yellow window
Is slow and intense as wheels
Silked close with turning-speed.
The sun cannot blow white enough to flower
Their breath in the lidded lake
More still. Though they must try to rise
To their feet, and aim the long spark of the blade
Through the sun, and with it cross
The heart of the voice of a fasting choir,
Though with their bodies they must shape the water
Until the ebbing needles of their heat

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Spring, nail them to holy armor from within,
They cannot quite bring sound
The figure haunting the latent sky:
He wavers between them, his mailed feet
And hands nearly living, nearly
Shaded out of dust, drifted,
Rocking, as the pines clear
Continually from the depth.

Once more their father calls.
A squirrel banks off high through sticks
That should be winter's but have flowered,
And the water shakes under the dogs,
Their jaws unearthly warmed, and their eyes,
Half holy with fear of the dream
Of sunlight crossing the open lake,
Descend, stop at the reeds, turn back
In a mist of boiling glass and flying

As he tries to step down from the death
Of the knight: from the barbed leaves
At his elbows licking the sun,
From the untouched, immobile cloud
With its water trembling to be lit
By his passing face, to the full purity
Of the world fed blindingly, and legendless,
The unaltered feast: but his eyes blur
In the sweat of the marvelling iron:
The sun-marked dazzle floods
Over his hidden face, his scaled, rustless fingers
Raised from the head of the living dog into cloud,

He being half the ritual of the dead,
And that sustaining. Virgin, Lion, Pale Horse, Dove:
Their veiled, historied waiting is now,

To have always been, the lake
Between their breaths, and he, come
Burning like a locust, a raised power of light
Helpless in leaves and reeds above the lake
Not quivered by his voice spread blown away,
Alone unceremonious, and of a falling bright.

James Dickey

THE LAST WATCH

What does a nor'east blow portend
To a sailor whose sailing
Days have come to the rope's end?

His hands have the feel of a running hawser,
His eyes are sharp
For any sign of wind or weather;

His feet are shuffling but still able
To walk a deck;
His spine is a knotty length of cable —

But he knows each wind may be the last,
Nor'east or south,
That he will ever feel go past,

So he sits with his back to the boat house door
To watch the sea
And test the strength of the wind's roar,

Knowing all storms are impotent
To wreck the life
Of an able seaman ocean spent.

Mary N. S. Whiteley

24

THE BLUE HORSE

That summer we saw the Blue Horse.
We tamed him. His sky-splashed mane
Hummed with the current of surcharged hoofs
That flowed into our stony lane.

His love for us was infinite:
The head held high; the tender mouth
That never knew a bit; the eyes
Compassionate as rain that follows drouth.

We loved him; loved, but not because
He was blue and blue horses are rare —
He taught us love; he tamed **us**, too —
Our wild minds learned new meanings for care.

Winter: the Blue Horse was with us still;
The mane now ragged; the eyes still bright
But brightness now admixed with pain;
We taught him hate; we showed him fright.

For Christmas found us listening in the church
To cruel stories; worshiping the star of war;
Our fear forgot his love — forgot
His grief at the sickly fear we bore.

We fought among ourselves: we killed;
The more we fought, the more we feared;
The Blue Horse cried often; you struck me
One day and the Blue Horse disappeared.

We found him when the snow had melted —
Rotted eyes; the mouth become a leer —
He tamed us with his eager love —
We killed him with our feeble fear.

Melvin Walker La Follette

THE RETURN

When dreams superintend your dancing sleep,
Films of fear and intimate journeys
March through your darker antechambers
Revealing crude extravagances in our memory

Go with me and be my memory
And we will all our terrors find;
The equal desolations of our route
Will shape murderous models of our minds;
In some private purgatory of our race
You'll find your image and your sacred place,
For the Century stammers with disorders
As every factor animates its actors,
And like a public servant with a private purpose
Your morality is your own security;
    The void's within, but outside
    The City invests its suicide.

It rises within your holier family
Dueling in a bedroom's tightened air;
Paternal, real, consummate with love,
You recall a hundred taut realities
Mothering your infancy and savagery;
And as you face the things you were,
The lives you lived and the lives you lied
In childhood's green magic and black misery —
you re-enact the stages of all your raging ages.
Indelible, nimble, acquainted and distorted,
Our youth inherits many modern maladies,
Heroic external whims and mystical fallacies.
Though the world is young, we are old,
Abysmal, indexed, having secret passports
To the sacred fountains of ourselves,
To water the places that sanctify

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The massing mummeries of our eye.

The street of my childhood is a jewelled slum
Festooning the awkward mesmerisms of innocence.
Yet the picture here is all wrong;
It was a street of murder, mimicry and malice.
In my youth it killed
Ten citizens of fear and poverty . . .

This street is a tomb, for I saw it yesterday:
A soundless crumbling church
Near a pitiful synagogue
Facing two exits to vision and piety.
Tattered newspapers, in the cornered garbage,
Vie with the names of streets I ravaged
To lighten my burdens as a boy.
Their past stab my dust-laden eyes,
As antennaed, pigeonless roofs impale me,
Corrupting the low skies
With ambushes of grief.

The ghosting docks I knew are still with ships,
Loading every commodity of our industry;
And massive buildings have shimmered heavenward
To make new tenements when the Century ends;
I know, it was like that forty years ago.
I see similar faces cradled to their mothers.

> The house that I was born in
> Is now a parking lot for trucks;
> Another, boarded and unevenly shuttered,
> Closes in its evil with the night;
> And the factory where I stole candy
> On Armistice Day, now celebrates decay.

Some old citizens are still here, waiting
For time's induction to another stillness.
The Negroes have come and made a church

And their singing is strangely real to me.
The fat little stores, so ancient, then,
Wear their age with commercial indifference;
And on some suburb's green patch, the friends
I had as a boy, have settled
Their middle age's brooding disenchantment.

I walk alone, vainly competing with my sentiments,
Remembering what I was and what I have become,
Breathing from each street a fable of my world.
I grasp for the age that turned my Century
To create my innocence and my rage.
I remember the strong boys, who robed their fists
As boxers, to general us in gangs;
And those who became thieves, and murdered, later,
Incorporated into crime like movie-scripts . . .
I wear ten scars for cruelty, five for cowardice;
I wear three for fear, two for innocence,
And one for my father's rage.

And I remember those who walked alone
To listen to themselves as they paced careers;
The teacher who lectured to me avidly
On the Russian and the German souls;
But he is dead, like the nations
He had not known too well.

This is a moment in another Hell,
And I know each step that walked my way.
In some blackness before my front door
I saw ten nationalities become American.
Brimming with venom, filled with Europe,
And cursing their strangeness, I knew
Ten versions of malice, race and hate . . .
And I knew their vagrant daughters
Pregnant with bastards at fifteen . . .

Harry Roskolenko

28

HOME-CROSSING

In the town a young fellow comes, dreamy-eyed, calling
My name. He was at camp, it seems, when I
Last counselled there. "You did a thing," he says
That struck me more than all the things I have seen.
It was on the ferry that night coming home

Across the river; the current was bad. A stranger
Said he'd dare anyone to swim. You stripped
And stood at the stern. I thought, 'My God.' Then you
Went in, swam with the ferry, caught it, climbed on
Again. I'll not forget it as long as I live."

For me, I had lived too long. "You mean you don't
Remember, at all, a thing like that?" he cried.
"I've done so many damn fool things in my time,
I can't keep them straight," I said; and to myself:
"What a stupid act to celebrate so long."

But then like water widening the gap it has made,
All that poured back through the crevice of his words:
I saw the river glowing under the moon
In sweeping turbulence and liquid sound;
Once more I took the dare — not false or vain —;

For night and water cried to unclothe what we are,
Breathe a time in the moon, then out and down . . .
Mother of waters, may no turn or flinching
Mar the clean line of the plunge, when we
On the home-crossing dive in the deep river of stars.

Charles G. Bell

I WILL NOT TALK OF LOVE

A giant sat in a stream,
Played patty-cake with the sun

And spangled fish that swam
Round him as round a moon.

Below, the water glowed
With palest light where good
The clarities swam, as fish
Nodding against his flesh.

About him danced the leaves
As if a thousand loves
Had mated him with them.
He smiled, who could not swim,

And waved them on to flow
Between the vastnesses
Of blue and blue, a sum
Inside gigantic wisdom.

When taught of other room,
A pool or stream, he rose,
Too huge to swim, and walked
In sunlight, splashing, home.

Anthony Ostroff

NATURE MORTE WITH RED AND GOLD CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Their angular wounds
Sink, unknown,
Like Cambodia,
Overgrown.

Pollen and light
Rest, congealed,
As though the root
Still toiled.

They fade, flourishing,
In a jar's breadth,
Their sap nourishing
Their death.

Chrysanthemums
On bone branches
Wane and gleam
In two bunches:

Gold and rust,
Sun and dust,
Would and must.

S. P. Zitner

30

NOT AGAIN

Sometimes I am embarrassed
by the recurrence of that pronoun
which calls into question, rather into
prominence, my own face.

Of course I
am embarrassed, what else?
Like with the waiter with the tray on which
repose (only) his own hands.

Always —
SundayMondayTuesdayWednesdayThursdayFriday
Saturday —
no matter where I look,
I am there.

It was a breeze and a seashell
brought in Venus —
but I can be here
without going anywhere.

So goodbye
until we meet again,
and when you come, walk right in.
It's I.

Robert Creeley

BEACH SCENE

Two girls strip among the June palmettos.
Two cats, one black, one grey, sit in the sun
Gazing blank-eyed towards the harbor.

Two sailors, savoring shore-leave and summer,
Walk from their ship. In the heat they pause,
Sexbrimful eyes caught by glints in the shade.

Grey and black cat walk on sly feet, bored but lively.
If a mouse takes a turn they will pause.
They will stiffen, backs arched. They will pounce.

Carroll Coates

PAIDEIA

At sixty, and retired
He studies psychoanalysis
In the division of adult education.

He expects to be getting a degree
Next year or the year after
Then he would like to read some poetry.

A man who stops learning, he says
Might as well be dead.

Howard Bennett

GRACE

What do you mean: you're lonely and afraid?
What do you say: your heart is black and bare?
You are not tenderer nor feebler made
Than all the rest, entitled to despair!
You cry that friends are false or else half-hearted
Or dead or dying, leaving you alone,
That it's too late to get a new growth started;
The worried world impervious as a stone.
Late to set out (you moan) umbrageous plants
(A lifetime between cone and spreading fir)
You'd never see the fruit, but only wants
Always recurring each remaining year!
So did God seem to chide me in my need:
Then lowered to my heart a shower of seed.

Alida Carey Gulick

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